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ABSTRACT

This document is a protocol for interviewing new faculty to be used in conjunction with a new faculty survey as part of a project to create a profile of new faculty at U.S. colleges and universities. An introduction reports that the survey had been distributed to 5 schools (2 liberal arts colleges, a community college, a comprehensive university, and a research university) and that researchers used the protocol to interview 40 percent of those responding. The results of the interview combined with the survey revealed that: (1) many institutions are hiring more women and minorities; (2) most new faculty are content with their new place of employment, (3) most new faculty are hired at age 38, and most earned their highest degree 8 years prior; (4) many new faculty feel intense stress during their first few months on the job as they learn to deal with teaching, research, and family obligations; (5) teaching experience and expectations vary greatly with new faculty at research institution having the least teaching experience; and (6) institutional and departmental support for new faculty varies greatly. The bulk of the document is the protocol itself with brief general instructions to the interviewer. The interview covers the hiring process, faculty and institutional support, students, instruction, and teaching norms. Also included are two copies of a participant consent form. (JB)

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New Faculty Interview Protocol

ED 048901

Researchers at the National Center for Postsecondary Teaching, Learning, and Assessment (NCTLA) used the following interview protocol, along with a new faculty survey, to create a profile of new faculty at U.S. colleges and universities. After distributing a survey to five schools (two liberal arts colleges, a community college, a comprehensive university, and a research university), NCTLA researchers interviewed 40 percent of the survey respondents. The interview questions dealt with hiring processes, institutional support, and concepts and norms about teaching.

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The interview, combined with the original survey, revealed that 1) many institutions are hiring more women and minorities; 2) most new faculty are content with their new place of employment; 3) most new faculty are hired at age 38, and most earned their highest degree eight years prior; 4) many new faculty feel intense stress during their first few months on the job as they learn to deal with teaching, research, and family obligations; 5) teaching experience and expectations vary greatly with new faculty at research institutions having the least teaching experience; and 6) institutional and departmental support for new faculty varies greatly.

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New Faculty Interview Protocol

NATIONAL CENTER ON POSTSECONDARY
Teaching, Learning, & Assessment

INSTRUCTIONS TO THE INTERVIEWER

Words in caps should not be read out loud. Transition sentences are in bold and should be read out loud.

Insert the name of the department or institution where indicated.

Some of the questions have a list of possible answers (in caps) after them. If the respondent provides one of those answers, simply put a check mark next to it. Space is provided for other answers. Do not read what is in caps.

If you have to give further explanation of a question to a respondent, then indicate that you did so with an "X."

Use only prompts like, "Anything else?" "Can you give me an example?" "Could you elaborate on that?" "What do you mean by that?" "Any more thoughts on this?"
Again, if you provide such a prompt, indicate with a "P."

Two copies of the consent form are attached. Be sure both are signed and that one copy is left with the interviewee. (See paragraph F on the next page.)

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I. OPENING

A. Hello. I'm (INTERVIEWER NAME) from the National Center on Postsecondary Teaching, Learning, and Assessment. And you are (NEW FACULTY MEMBER NAME)?
Nice to meet you.

(YOU CAN TAKE TIME TO MENTION SOMETHING YOU KNOW ABOUT THE PERSON IN ORDER TO ESTABLISH FURTHER FAMILIARITY--E.G., YOU MAY BE ABLE TO SAY THAT YOU ARE IN THE SAME FIELD OR THAT YOU HAVE ALREADY SPOKEN ON THE PHONE.)

B. As you can see, I have brought along a camera so I can take your picture here in your office. It is not for anyone else to see, but it will help me remember our conversation.
(TAKE PICTURE.)

C. Before we start the interview, let me tell you briefly about the National Center. The National Center is a consortium of six universities doing research on various aspects of higher education. Have you seen our brochure?
(IF NOT, PROVIDE A COPY.)

D. In this project, we are interviewing and surveying new faculty at several colleges and universities over the next three years. We hope to learn how new faculty learn and experience their roles, and how to make the transition into that role easier. We are talking with a representative group of new, tenure-track faculty on this campus, as well as surveying a larger group of new faculty across five different campuses.

1. (IF WE HAVE RECEIVED THIS PERSON'S SURVEY:)

We have received your survey. Thank you for making time to complete the form.
(GO TO PARAGRAPH E)

2. (IF WE HAVE NOT RECEIVED THIS PERSON'S SURVEY:)

We have not yet received your survey. Have you recently put it in the mail?

a. (IF "YES":)

Thank you for making time to complete the survey. (GO TO PARAGRAPH E)

b. (IF "NO":)

In case you may have lost or misplaced your survey, here is an extra copy of the survey for you.

(PAUSE TO COPY ID NUMBER FROM TOP OF THIS PAGE ONTO BOTTOM RIGHT CORNER OF SURVEY COVER PAGE.)

The survey is an important part of this study. We would appreciate it if you would complete and return the survey by October 18.
(GO TO PARAGRAPH E)

E. I will be taking notes as we speak and may ask you to repeat some things to make sure that I record your words accurately. We understand that some of these questions may be hard to answer. However, we are interested in your first impressions after working here for a few weeks in this position. If a question simply does not apply to you, just say so.

F. Before we begin, will you please read and sign this consent form that assures you of confidentiality. Your name will not appear in our reports. All results from this project will be reported in group summary form only.

I will be asking questions about several topics--about your experiences with colleagues and students, and about teaching. I'd like to begin by going back to the hiring process.

II. THE INTERVIEW AND HIRING PROCESS

Your early impressions of (THIS INSTITUTION) occurred during the interview and hiring process. Our first few questions ask about that process.

1. I'd like to know about how you got this position. How did you learn about the job?
2. Why did you pursue the position?
3. As you considered accepting the position, what impressed you most positively about this position at (THIS INSTITUTION) ?
4. What impressed you least positively about this position at (THIS INSTITUTION) ?
5. Why do you think (THIS INSTITUTION) hired you?
6. Did you have any alternatives for other jobs? YES NO
IF YES: What were they?
7. Circumstances being the same and knowing what you know now, would you choose (THIS INSTITUTION) again? YES NO
Why?

III. SUPPORT FROM FACULTY AND THE INSTITUTION

Your further impressions about (THIS INSTITUTION) come from colleagues. You may remember that we asked about collegiality on the survey. The next few questions are structured questions about your relations with colleagues.

8. In general, how important is collegiality to your well-being and job satisfaction?

Is it: not very important somewhat important very important ?

9. On a scale of one to ten, how would you rate the quality of collegial support you're getting here at (INSTITUTION NAME). One is low and ten is high. ____

10. What are some examples of collegiality here?

11. Do you talk about teaching with your colleagues? YES NO

IF YES: What type of things do you talk about?

____ COURSE SYLLABI
____ STUDENT APATHY
____ TEACHING METHODS

12. Outside of scheduled activities like committee meetings, approximately how many campus colleagues do you interact with on a weekly basis?* ____

We are also interested in any mentoring relationships you may have experienced.

INTERVIEWER: IF THE RESPONDENT IS NOT ABLE TO PROVIDE HER/HIS OWN DEFINITION OF A MENTOR, PROMPT WITH THIS DEFINITION FROM KANTER. "MENTORS ARE PEOPLE WHOSE FUNCTIONS ARE PRIMARILY TO MAKE INTRODUCTIONS AND TO TRAIN NEW FACULTY TO MOVE EFFECTIVELY THROUGH THE SYSTEM"

13. Have you found or been assigned a mentor here?

NO (SKIP TO Q 16c) YES, FOUND YES, ASSIGNED

14. What do you and your mentor do?

____ ATTEND PROFESSIONAL MEETINGS TOGETHER
____ MEET TO TALK
____ OBSERVE EACH OTHER TEACHING
____ SHARE SYLLABI

15. What do you and your mentor talk about?

16. On a scale from one to ten,

- a. how would you rate your satisfaction with mentoring? ____
- b. how would you rate your satisfaction with the mechanisms for establishing mentoring in your department? ____
- c. how would you rate your desire for mentoring? ____

17. Prior to coming to this institution, did you have a significant mentoring relationship? YES NO

IF YES: Where? Who was it? Why did you consider this person a mentor?

Now we have a few questions about stress.

18. On a scale of one to ten, how much stress have you have experienced in this academic year so far?
Ten equals the most stressed you have ever been in your life. ____

19. What are some causes of that stress?

20. Which of these causes contributed the most to your current stress level?*

21. How are you coping with the stress?

IV. UNDERSTANDING STUDENTS

In addition to your experiences with colleagues, we are also interested in your experiences with students.

22. At the beginning of the course, what information about students and how they learn is important to you?

23. When a student does not understand, what do you do?

24. On a scale of one to ten, how much influence do you think you have on student learning? ____

25. On a scale of one to ten,

a. how satisfied are you, generally, with students' preparation for individual class meetings? ____

b. how satisfied are you, generally, with their performance in class? ____

Our next set of questions deals with assessing student learning.

26. On a day to day basis, how do you assess student progress?

27. In terms of your grading, do you grade student involvement and participation?

YES

NO

IF YES: How?

28. Please describe your approach to grading. Do you grade relative to the past work of that individual, relative to the work of others, relative to a criterion of mastery, or in some other way?

RELATIVE TO
PAST WORK
OF INDIVIDUAL

RELATIVE TO
WORK OF
OTHERS

RELATIVE TO
CRITERION OF
MASTERY

OTHER

29. How do institutional or departmental policies influence your grading practices?

V. UNDERSTANDING INSTRUCTION

So far, we've talked about your impressions of this institution and colleagues, as well as students and grading. Now we have some questions about teaching.

30. How would you describe your teaching style?--That is, if you were to imagine a continuum with "facts and principles" teaching at one end and "students running the class" at the other, how would you describe yourself?

31. Why have you selected this teaching style?

32. Once you have mastered the content of your field, what more do you need to know to be a successful teacher of (DISCIPLINE) at (INSTITUTION) ?

33. If we define teaching as the time spent preparing for teaching, teaching in class, working with students, and grading student work, about what percentage of your total work time would you say you spend teaching?*

The next two questions ask about how you evaluate your courses.

34. Will you have students evaluate your course? YES NO
IF YES: When, and how often?

35. On a scale of one to ten, how useful do you think student evaluations will be?

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Some colleges and universities have teaching improvement centers; others do not. We are collecting information about these centers.

36. Is there a teaching improvement center on your campus? [IF NO, GO TO Q40b]

YES

NO

37. What services does the center offer?

- ☐ BROWN BAG LUNCH DISCUSSIONS
- ☐ CLASSROOM OBSERVATIONS
- ☐ MID-TERM STUDENT EVALUATION FORMS
- ☐ NEWSLETTER
- ☐ PRIVATE CONSULTATIONS
- ☐ WORKSHOPS, SEMINARS

38. What kind of reputation does the center have?

39. Have you participated in any activities the center has offered? YES NO

a. IF YES: What activities? How often?

b. IF NO: On a scale of one to ten, what is the likelihood of your participation in a teaching improvement activity before the end of this academic year? ____

40a. IF FACULTY MEMBER PARTICIPATED IN A TEACHING IMPROVEMENT ACTIVITY:
Did participation in those activities enhance your teaching?

YES

NO

b. IF FACULTY MEMBER DID NOT PARTICIPATE IN SUCH AN ACTIVITY:
Would participation in a teaching improvement activity enhance your teaching?

YES

NO

VI. NORMS ABOUT TEACHING

Finally, we are interested in your perceptions about what is appropriate or not appropriate here regarding teaching.

41. What are some examples of things that are not appropriate here?

a. First, in the area of actual classroom teaching?

b. In the area of grading and evaluating student work?

c. In the area of interaction with students?

d. Are there examples from other areas that come to mind?

42. What is likely to happen to a faculty member here who does something that is not appropriate?

43. How did you learn what is not appropriate?

- ☐ ATTENDED AN ORIENTATION SESSION FOR NEW FACULTY
- ☐ PERSONAL VIOLATION (TRIAL AND ERROR)
- ☐ SPOKE WITH COLLEAGUES DIRECTLY
- ☐ SPOKE WITH DEPARTMENT HEAD DIRECTLY

44. On a scale of one to ten, indicate the extent to which your teaching is in accordance with the expectations here. ____

VII. CLOSING

I have just one more question. You have given me information on many things, but is there anything I should have asked you that you would like to comment on?

As you know, I expect to be back to talk with you again next spring. When I get in touch with you to schedule another visit, would it be possible to communicate over an e-mail system? (GET INFORMATION ABOUT E-MAIL ADDRESS IF POSSIBLE AND PERMISSIBLE.)

Thank you very much for your time. Your thoughts and insights are very important to us. I look forward to talking with you in the spring.

NATIONAL CENTER ON POSTSECONDARY
Teaching, Learning, & Assessment

Participant Consent Form

The New Faculty Project is a project of the National Center for Postsecondary Teaching, Learning, and Assessment and is funded by the United States Department of Education. Starting in fall 1991, the project is studying newly hired faculty at four types of colleges and universities and how they adjust to their institutions and to the teaching profession. The study is directed by Professor Robert J. Menges of Northwestern University.

Your institution has endorsed participation in this project. Your privacy as an interview participant will be fully respected. Your responses are anonymous and your name will not be associated with the results in any way.

We expect that you will find the interview interesting and beneficial. Nevertheless, we want to emphasize that you may refuse to answer particular interview questions or stop the interview and decline the use of data without penalty of any kind. You are free to withdraw your consent and to discontinue participation at any time, without prejudice.

* * * * *

I have had an opportunity to ask questions about this project. I consent to participate, and my consent is given of my own free choice. A copy of this form has been given to me.

Participant

Researcher

Date